

207 1087
THE *Rexman*
DISPUTE

BETTER
ADJUSTED,

About the
PROPER TIME

Of applying for a

REPEAL

OF THE

Corporation and Test Acts,

England & Charles II.
By shewing

That *some Time* is proper.

In a Letter to the Author of the *Dispute adjusted*,

SAMUEL CHANDLER, D. D.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. ROBERTS near the Oxford-Arms
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Cross-Keys in the Poultry, M DCC XXXII.

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In a letter to the Secretary of the Institution
LONDON, 1851

LONDON

Printed by J. Bennett near the Old Bailey
in Strand Lane; and by G. & J. Colver at the
British Museum in the Town of London



THE
DISPUTE

Better adjusted, &c.

SIR,



Do not wonder that the enemies of liberty, and the advocates for high-church power, should think all times improper to promote any designs and attempts for the common good of mankind, and the honour of the christian religion. They have in all ages of the church sacrificed the principles of piety and virtue to their own secular interest, and trampled upon the cause of God, and the rights of men, to maintain their own unnatural and unchristian

christian usurpations. That the *Corporation* and *Test* acts are an abridgment of the natural rights of subjects, you yourself acknowledge, and that they have been the occasions of the most horrid profanation of one of the most sacred institutions of christianity, is a thing as evident as the experience of many years can make it, and justifies the Dissenters in all reasonable and peaceable attempts, to endeavour to procure the removal of their own difficulties, and to prevent any farther prostitution of the solemn appointments of the christian church and worship. To accomplish these ends, the Dissenters have been considering the properest season and methods of acting, being all of them fully persuaded, that the repeal of the two acts is reasonable and fit, though unhappily divided amongst themselves as to the particular season when it is fittest to attempt it. But it seems *they are fools* to imagine that any season whatsoever can be fit, and the dispute is adjusted to their hands, and they are told, that *no time is or can be proper*.

I will not pretend to guess, Sir, who you are ; but your determination of the dispute I shall take the liberty to consider, and to affirm concerning it, that it is partial and unfair, and founded upon the most unrighteous representation of the Dissenters and their principles, and upon such a scheme of politicks as hath neither honour or truth to support it. This is what I hope to make fully appear in the ensuing pages ; and as you leave the Dissenters * *to debate and determine the point* concerning the proper time *amongst themselves*, I must beg leave, *as the cause is still depending, to make myself so far a party to it*, as to shew that you have mistaken the

the case, and thrust yourself into the arbitration of an affair that either you do not understand, or have wickedly misrepresented.

Your first observation is, ** it cannot be denied by either of the contending parties, that these two acts were designed for the security and support of the established constitution, in church and state.* Supposing they were, doth this prove the wisdom and equity of these acts? Or that after a long experience of the inconveniencies occasioned by them, they ought never to be repealed? If you would do any thing to the purpose to vindicate them, you should shew, that they have answered the end of their being enacted, and that they have never been the occasions of the most horrid impieties: And if the admission of persons into offices of the highest trust without any sacramental qualification be consistent with the preservation of the established church, you should shew in good politicks the necessity and expediency of their farther continuance; and if you be a christian, and a christian minister, who have any regard to the sacredness of your character, and the honour of your master's appointment, you should farther shew, that if the sacrament hath ever been abused in consequence of these acts, how you can answer it to your conscience, or the tribunal of your great Lord, to become an advocate for the continuance of a practice that is a scandal to the christian name and profession. 'Till you have done this, your preaching about acts for the security of the church will never do any honour to the church you would secure, nor convince any man, that you are either a christian or an *Englishman*.

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I know this argument of the security of the church is frequently insisted on by the advocates for these acts. Thus Dr. *Sherlock* presses the Bp. of *Bangor* with it over and over again in his *Vindication of the Corporation, &c.* But in the name of all that is good, what is there in any argument of this kind becoming the pen of a christian divine? The question is not, whether the acts were made for the security of the church. Every body knows they were: But whether it is not abundantly proved by experience, that christianity is dishonoured, and the institution of our blessed Saviour debased, and the memorials of Christ's body and blood trampled, as it were, under foot, by many of those who receive the sacrament in obedience to these acts? If this be true, let heaven and earth judge of the christianity and equity of these proceedings, and whether it is any honour to the church of *England* to be defended by such guards, as destroy the reverence due to the institutions of the church of Christ. All the laws of the Inquisition are made for the security of the church of *Rome*. But is that accursed tribunal ever the more righteous, because made for the defence of the church? And during the reign of *Charles II.* conventicle and five mile acts were passed for the security of the church of *England*. And if this was any justification of those acts, the granting the toleration was an unreasonable thing, and continuance of it can never be defended. But to proceed,

You tell us, that * *the Corporation act in particular was levelled wholly against the Dissenters*. I must beg leave to differ from you in this respect; for the Corporation act was made in the year 1661, before

before there was any avowed separation from the church of *England*, which did not commence 'till after the act of Uniformity, that took place *Bartholomew-day* 1662. After *Charles II.* restoration endeavours were used to unite the different parties of the established church, and those differences were not rendered irreconcilable 'till the commencement of the Uniformity act ; and of consequence the Corporation act could not be made wholly against the Dissenters ; because when that act took place those now called Dissenters were actually in the church, and a very considerable body of it.

But supposing this observation of the Corporation act being *wholly levelled against the Dissenters* was as true as it is false in fact, yet with what decency or modesty can this be urged as a reason for the continuance of it ? Is there any churchman in *England* that can deny that the Presbyterians had an hand, and a *principal hand*, in the restoration of *Charles II.* ? Could the royal party, which had long been trampled under foot, and rendered wholly helpless, have of themselves accomplished this great event ? Was it not at last effected by a presbyterian general and army ? Yea, did not that very Parliament, which had taken the solemn league and covenant, invite the King to his kingdom and crown ? And what was the grateful return ? Why persecutions and penalties, Corporation and Uniformity acts, and all the severities that an ungrateful Prince and his relentless prelates could inflict upon them.

Besides, if the reasons for making the Corporation act do not now subsist, how can the continuance of it be justified ? The preamble to that act expressly declares, that the design of it was, *that*

Corporations

Corporations might probably be perpetuated in the hands of persons well affected to his Majesty and the established Government ; and in the first enacting clause it is farther said, that for the preventing mischiefs for the time to come, and for preservation of the publick peace both in church and state, viz. from those many evil spirits which were before represented as still working, Be it, &c. But can these reasons, with any conscience or truth, be asserted to affect the Dissenters of the present time ? They are all of them to a man well affected to his Majesty and the established Government. They have suffered from the church of *England* for their known fidelity to the present Royal Family, and bravely scorned and protested against all measures that were in a late reign entered into in favour of the Pretender, and to the exclusion of his late and present Majesty from the throne. And as to those Corporations where they have any influence, let their conduct be witness for them, and their enemies speak the truth, and they must confess, that they have never given their votes for Tories and Jacobites. If any such have been sent up from any Boroughs, it hath been by those which have been wholly under the influence of such who have professed themselves the zealous sons of the established church. And as to the evil spirits that have been working against the interests of the present Royal Family, I defy you to produce any of them amongst the Protestant Dissenters. They have had none of their ministers suspected of, hanged for treason, nor any of their people engaged with Papists and Jacobites in actual rebellion. Look nearer at home, Sir, and you will not be at a loss in what communion to find them. And indeed, if the faults of some in any party be a reason for the exclusion

of all of them from places, &c. the sons of the church of *England* will stand but a bad chance; yea what will become of my Lords the Bishops in the house of Lords, since they have had one of that number who deserved to be hanged, and was actually banished his country as a traitor. The truth is, the Corporation act was wholly made to gratify the spleen and revenge of certain persons, to divide and weaken the Protestant interest, and to keep those out of Corporations, who were known to be most zealous against the measures of a popish reign, and the designs of introducing an arbitrary and tyrannical government in church and state.

As to the Test act, you acknowledge, * that *it had a more immediate eye to the Papists*. If you had said an entire eye to them, you had not been mistaken; not only because it is entitled, *An Act for preventing dangers which may happen from popish recusants*, but because there is no mention of Protestant Dissenters in it; and because it was made in that session of Parliament, in which the Commons not only resolved *Nem. Con.* that a bill should be brought in for the ease of Dissenters, but actually passed a bill for that purpose, though it was afterwards dropped by art or fraud in the house of Lords. So far was the Parliament from intending to lay farther difficulties on Protestant Dissenters, that, though they had for many years before persecuted them with great severity, they now saw it necessary to relieve them from those they were under, and to bend their utmost power to secure the nation against the dangers of popery. And that this was the only intention of the Test act, in the apprehension of some of the best judges in the

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kingdom

* p. 6.

kingdom, appears from the fourth reason given by some noble Lords in their protest against the continuance of it, at the beginning of the reign of the immortal King *William*. Because, say they, *it turns the edge of the law, we know not by what fate, upon Protestants and friends to the government, which was intended against Papists.*— And thus the taking the sacrament, which was enjoyed ONLY AS A MEANS to discover Papists, is now made a distinguishing duty amongst Protestants, to weaken the whole, by casting off a part of them. I suppose the protesting Lords understood the institution of this act, as well as you.

You add, with a kind of sneer, * that the Dissenters insist on it as great merit on their part that they did not oppose it, upon some encouragement given, as they pretend, to be relieved from the penalties of it one time or other. I know some persons are insensible to all obligations of merit in any but themselves, and have no regard to solemn promises after they have gained their ends by making them. But however the conduct of the Dissenters in this case is no less disinterested and praise-worthy, nor shall their enemies deprive them of the glory of it. When *Charles II.* published his declaration of indulgence, the Dissenters refused to accept it in common with the Papists, and were willing to come into any bills, though to their own disadvantage, to save the nation from the common destruction that threatened them. And in particular they knew that the Test act, though levelled only against popish Recusants, might be turned against themselves; and though the Court or popish Party proposed, in opposition to the Test act, that some regard might be had to Protestant Dissenters, yet

* p. 6.

yet Mr. Love, a member of that Parliament, and a Dissenter, moved as the common sense of the rest of them, that *an effectual security might be found against Popery, and that nothing might interpose 'till that was done. When that was over, the Dissenters would try to deserve some favour, but at present they were willing to lie under the severity of the laws, rather than clog a more necessary work with their concerns.* This is an instance of generosity seldom found in party managements, an instance of noble concern for the interest and security of the church of *England* in the Dissenters; for it was for the support of the established church against Popery that they exposed themselves to the severity of their enemies, and sacrificed their own liberties rather than endanger her. And will you assert that there was no merit in this behaviour, and that the church of *England* owes no obligation to the men who thus defended her at their own expence?

As to the pretended encouragements you speak of, they were not only *real encouragements*, but *absolute promises*, made by several members of the house of Lords and Commons, who were zealous for the Test act only as levelled against popish Recusants, and who would not have voted for the passing of it, had it not been for the then posture of affairs, and with the hopes of some future favourable opportunity, to secure the Dissenters against the penalties of it.

But however, you tell us, * that *when their (the Dissenters) case came under a solemn deliberation in Parliament, and a toleration was granted them, the Legislature was so far from exempting them, that they expressly included them in the disabilities and penalties*

ties of the Test act ; and that this appears from the act of toleration. But how difficult a thing is it for a man that writes in favour of the prostitution of divine ordinances, and against the rights of mankind, to write impartially. It is true, the act of Toleration doth include the Dissenters under the penalties of the Test act : But should you not have told your readers that this was absolutely contrary to the judgment and desire of the King ; who, in one of his speeches to the two Houses, says, *he hoped they would leave room for the admission of all Protestants, that were willing and able to serve him, which was a thing would tend to the better uniting them amongst themselves, and the strengthening them against their common adversaries.* The same thing was insisted upon in the house of Peers by the Lords *Delamere, Stamford, North and Grey, Chesterfield, Wharton, Lovelace, and Vaughan* ; and though the clause for taking away the Test was rejected in the house of Lords, and another clause, to make receiving in any protestant Congregation a sufficient qualification, met with the same fate, yet the Lords *Oxford, Lovelace, Wharton, Mordant, Montague, and Paget*, entered their protest against it, and gave such reasons for their protest, as you should have answered, before you could in justice or conscience make the decision you have done. The truth is, that those who were the heartiest friends to the revolution wished a repeal of those acts ; and that the rejecting the clause for the repeal was owing to the influence of the High-Church party, who, generally speaking, were enemies to the Revolution it self, and indeed even to the Toleration which was granted to the Dissenters.

However they peaceably enjoyed the benefit of it,

it, 'till the latter end of Q. Anne's reign, when High-Church and Jacobitism triumphed in the prospects of Persecution and the Pretender, and the act passed against occasional Conformists. This was repealed in the beginning of his late Majesty's reign, and as you suppose amongst other reasons for this; * that *receiving the sacrament was an evidence, that though they liked their own way better they did not think ours unlawful.* Whereas, say you, † the present attempt to repeal the Corporation and Test acts is to let those into places of power and trust, who think the service of the Church of England to be sinful, and who in consequence have not only a rooted aversion to it, but think themselves bound in conscience to do all that is in their power to abolish it. This how roundly soever asserted, I must take the liberty to affirm, is an infamous and false reflection upon the Protestant Dissenters, who neither think the service of the church of England in the administration of the sacrament to be sinful, nor have any principles of conscience that bind them to do all that is in their power to abolish it. They do indeed think, that the glory of that church would shine brighter, if some alterations were made in it, and if it was placed upon a larger foundation. But doth this imply that they think themselves bound in conscience to do all that is in their power to destroy it? *All that is in their power?* What by insurrections and rebellions? Sir, they have been frequent amongst those of the establishment, but not amongst the Dissenters. Did you ever see them in tumults and riots demolishing churches? Have not the High-Church been remarkable for demolishing the churches of Protestant Dissenters, without law, and in direct defiance

to

* p. 7.

† p. 85

to it? If you mean only, by *all that is in their power*, by reason and argument, by patience and forbearance, you do them justice, when you represent them as bound in conscience to procure by these methods the removal of some blemishes in the constitution of the church. If you mean any other methods, it is defamation and vile scandal, and they scorn the charge, and the man that throws it.

The present attempt to repeal the Corporation and Test acts, is not *to let those into places of power and trust, who think the service of the church of England to be sinful*, but those who think it a sin, that the sacrament in any church should be debased into an instrument of worldly policy, and after the consecration of the memorials of the body and blood of Christ, that they should be defecrated by being given as memorials of the qualifying laws of *England*. They are willing to give the church of *England* any proofs of their owning it as a part of the church of Christ, and generally speaking, have no objection to the posture of kneeling at the sacrament. But they do think it a scandal to the church, that the sacred elements should be prostituted to wretches that receive them only as qualifications, that the *table of the Lord* should be turned into the *altar of Mammon*, and the knees bent at the same time in the honour of the Saviour of mens souls, and as a token of adoration to the God of riches.. Shew, Sir, if you can, that this is not the case, and if it be, try to defend the practice as a christian.

Nor is the present attempt to let those into places of power and trust *who think themselves bound in conscience to do all that is in their power,*

*to abolish the service of the church of England, or as you express it a little lower, one part of whose conscience it is to destroy the established worship and government; and again in other words, * such, who judging your communion lawful, are obliged in conscience to destroy it as soon as they can.* You should, Sir, have been well acquainted with the hearts and principles of the Dissenters, before you should have ventured thus to repeat a charge which they detest, and you can never make good. A candid man would not have ventured on it. An honest man would have been ashamed to do it. But I do not wonder to find the want of these virtues in a champion for such a cause. The man that can professedly plead against the rights of the Redeemer, and the honour of his institutions, can be no proper advocate for the rights of subjects. The prostitution of the sacrament is worthy the occasion of it! The childrens bread is thrown to dogs, to deprive others of their natural properties! Go on, Sir, thus to plead the honour of the church; but give me leave to acquaint you, that the present attempt is to let those into places of power and trust, who love your church so well as to think themselves bound in conscience to do all that is in their power, consistent with the peace of the nation, and their allegiance to the best of Princes, to remove this scandal to the church and nation in general. They will do all in their power, by their prayers to God as christians, to incline the hearts of all degrees of men to promote so desirable an end; and by their humble and peaceable applications to the legislature, from whose known equity and goodness they have reason to expect
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the long desired reformation. And this attempt, Sir, you should look on as an instance of real affection in them to the established church, especially as the persons who make it have given the church many other proofs of their attachment to it; especially during the reign of *Charles II.* at the Revolution, and in the four memorable years of *Q. Anne*; when had the measures then taken by the zealots of the church prospered, the church it self must have sunk in ruins, and the civil constitution been absolutely destroyed.

You your self, Sir, have offered a reason to shew that the Dissenters do not refuse the sacramental Test, only because the Sacrament is to be received in the church of *England*, and because they think it sinful to receive it there; but because they think the Test it self to be unlawful in whatsoever place the Sacrament be received for this purpose; for you tell us, * that *some of the Dissenters friends could not but see that the objection was altogether as strong against a sacramental Test in a conventicle as in a church.* In *Scotland* the names *Conventicle* and *Church* have a quite different application from what they have in *England*; but to let that pass, the Dissenters themselves acknowledge that the objection is as strong in one case as the other, and therefore their attempt is not for a liberty to be qualified in their own meetings, but that this qualification should be absolutely removed. Had they attempted the former the charge would have been with more appearance of reason, that they had a rooted aversion to the service of the church of *England* than it can now be, when it is their
avowed

avowed principle, that the Test itself is unlawful wheresoever it is administered.

Whether this be so or no, let the controversy between † *the two combatants of great note, who have now the honour to sit on the Bishops Bench*, determine, and let every impartial person judge which of them maintained the best cause, whose weapons were the fairest, and the most becoming a christian divine, and on which side the victory fell. Though I must do one of the combatants the justice to own, that his weapons being of a carnal make, were stronger in that respect than those of the other, which were spiritual; it having been generally found true by experience, that arguments derived from acts of Parliament, human laws, and political considerations, have more prevailed, and been attended with better success, than those drawn from the nature of religion, and the evidences of scripture and reason.

But this argument you, Sir, seem to trouble your self very little about. Whether the Test be lawful or no, you affirm * *that it is incumbent on those Dissenters, who rest singly on that objection (which is the case almost of all of them) to find out some other Test that will effectually keep out both Papists and Dissenters.* What ever becomes of the honour of the institutions of the christian church, the church of *England* must at all adventures have all the places of worldly honour and preferment to herself. But do you think to do that church any honour by representing her so exceeding covetous and voracious? Many a rich morsel hath she devoured already; but surely it must be an unconscionable stomach that can be contented with

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nothing

† p. 9.

* *Ibid.*

nothing less than the whole. May not this at last occasion a dangerous surfeit? Treat your mother, Sir, I beseech you, with a little more decency and tenderneſs. I doubt not but ſhe hath been exceeding kind to you, and nourished you up with her choicest milk. Why then should you be fond of disgracing her by so invidious an account of her? The Dissenters are absolutely content, till her arms are opened a little wider, to leave her in possession of every emolument belonging to her as *mother church*. Of these they envy her none, nor do they desire or ask a single one. Their humble request relates only to the rights of subjects, which I presume the legislature have a power of granting them, without asking leave of the church whether they shall or no; especially as the granting them can be no prejudice to the church, except the church is pleased to think herself injured, because justice is done to others. You must therefore excuse the Dissenters, Sir, from finding out another Test that shall exclude them equally with the Papists, nor would any man have thought them equally worthy exclusion, but one of the truly moderate and christian spirit of Bp. *Laud*, with whom it was an axiom, *that the Presbyterians were as bad as the Papists*.

If you would have them find out a Test against *the Papists*, they have one, Sir, ready at your service. If you please to look into the act of Parliament that excludes Papists from sitting in the house of Lords and Commons, you will find a way to keep them out of all other places of power and trust, *viz.* by rendering them incapable, if they are found in any, of *prosecuting any suits, to be guardians, executors or administrators, and of taking any legacy or deed of gift, and moreover to*
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forfeit 500 *l*. You cannot but be sensible that the Test extends to the members of neither house. And yet when did you hear of a Papist present in either of those honourable assemblies? If there have been any such, they must have come in under the disguise of the sons of the church of *England*. If then there are laws which effectually exclude the Papists from seats in Parliament, those very laws applied by Parliament would as effectually exclude them from all other offices whatsoever. And you may see to your fullest conviction, that as the nation hath not thought it ever fit to insist on the sacramental Test as a qualification for the highest trusts in the kingdom, those of the legislature itself; the peace of the nation, and the religion and constitution of it may be fully preserved without it; and you will do well in your next three-penny discourse to shew, why Mr. Mayor, his worship the Justice, or the Exciseman should be required to give better proofs of their affection to the church and state, than a Lord of Parliament, or a member of the honourable house of Commons.

Thus, Sir, you have your question answered, *What then shall exclude the Papists if the sacramental Test be abolished?* You indeed tell us *not oaths, nor declarations*, which you apprehend may be broke through for the good of the catholic cause. But if these won't, *pains and penalties* will. Name the man, who being a Papist, hath sat in either house since the law to exclude them both; otherwise we have fact against preaching, and your declamations may please your self, but every one else will think them impertinent. But why should oaths be thought such insufficient securities? * One
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* *Kind. Cor. Sec. part. 2.*

of the noted combatants before mentioned endeavours to prove, that an oath is as sacred a thing as the Sacrament, and to vindicate the imposing the sacramental Test by the same reasons as the requiring an oath. So that the advocates for the Test differ amongst themselves in their way of pleading for it. To serve one turn the Sacrament and an oath have as much religion in them one as the other; to serve another, * the Sacrament is *the most solemn act of the christian worship*, and a bar of a much stronger kind than an oath. Oaths, it seems, may be dispensed with for the good of the catholick cause, *i. e.* † a man may pawn all his faith, hope and trust in God for the truth of what he delivers, and yet be dispensed with after he hath made such solemn pawn. But *joyning with the church of England in the most solemn act of christian worship is a bar of the strongest kind*. What stronger than a man's pawning his faith and hope, and trust in God? How doth this appear? Doth a Papiſt think a protestant Sacrament, which he beleives to be no Sacrament at all, and to have no manner of religion in it, to be a more solemn thing than an oath, by which he pawns all his faith, and hope, and trust in God? Or do you think in your conscience, that the men who would venture to *poysen their God* for the good of the catholick cause, would scruple to receive bread and wine in your churches for the advancement of the same cause? Sir, the church of Rome denies that you administer any Sacraments, and of consequence your Sacraments can be no security against them.

But you say that their receiving the Sacrament in

* *Disp. Adj.* p. 11.

† *Vind. Cor.* &c p. 106.

in your church is *an open and publick acknowledgment that 'tis a true church, and your ministry a true ministry.* But indeed, Sir, this is a great mistake. It is, if you please, an acknowledgment that they are hypocrites, but not one bit that they are believers in your church. They have whatever they do, depend on it, a sovereign contempt for your church and ministry. The compleat historian tells us, * that King *Charles II.* lived in a *profest communion with the church of England*; and yet I believe no one now questions but that he lived and died a papist; and his profest communion with the church of *England* could not therefore proceed from his faith in her as a true church, but from reasons of state, and other political considerations.

The same historian also tells us, † that in the year 1682, long after the Test was made, that some Papists assumed the name of Protestants, and under that disguise thrust themselves into places and employments, and that amongst them one at least crept into a cure of souls, one *Duffey, a Scotchman*, who obtained the rectory of *Raile in Essex*. Could these men get in without the qualification? If they were hypocrites enough to feign themselves Protestants, did they not do every thing that might make others think them so? Or would the honest rector of *Raile* refused to have administered or taken the Sacrament according to the rites of your church? Did not *Dr. Goodman*, bishop of *Gloucester* live in the communion of the church of *England*, and live and die a papist? You see, Sir, the *English* Sacrament is no such bugbear to a Papist; they will receive it when their interest requires

* V. 3. p. 422.

† *Ibid.* p. 398.

quires it, and by so doing can never be imagin'd to own your church and ministry to be true and valid. The profession of doing so is false, and made only with a design the more effectually to ruin you.

But besides Papists, have you never had any Deists that have qualified themselves by taking the Test? I could name you names if that were not too invidious. Upon what principles do they receive the Sacrament in your church? What upon that of acknowledging your church to be a true church, and your ministry a true ministry? Ridiculous. They laugh at your church, and the Sacrament administred in it, and think your ministers and all other ministers to be impostors and cheats. I'll tell you in your own words upon what principle they receive it; because by * *receiving the Sacrament according to the church of England they do all that the Test Act requires.* 'Tis the law of the land, and therefore they comply with it; and should the law require them to be re-baptized or ordained, they would submit to it for the same reason; and therefore the suggestion conveyed to your readers, that whoever receives the Sacrament in your church gives an open acknowledgment of the truth of your church and ministry is impertinent and without foundation.

Having done with these observations, you proceed to make some remarks on the abridgments of men's natural rights, which are just as much to the purpose as the former. I must indeed do you the justice as to own, that you allow the Corporation and Test acts to be an invasion or abridgment of these natural rights, because

because you vindicate them by producing other instances where such rights as you say are abridged, and not by urging that they are no invasions or abridgments at all. Well then, allowing that these acts are an invasion of natural rights, how do you defend them? Why from the nature of society and government it self. But how doth it follow, that because societies are formed for the preservation of all men's natural rights, that therefore they are founded in an abridgment of such natural rights? If, as you allow, the Dissenters have a natural right with other subjects to places of profit and trust, doth the nature of society require that they should be deprived of that right without forfeiture? What is the nature of society founded in tyranny and injustice? I thought it had been for the preservation of liberty and property. Put your self, Sir, for once, amongst the *Emigrants*, from *Saltzburg*, and suppose your self a faithful subject of that state, and yet deprived of your natural rights as a subject, would you think that the nature of society required those cruel and unjust invasions?

You seem, Sir, to me to have no notion of the nature of government and society, or else to have wilfully misrepresented the design of them: Society in its nature requires no abridgment of any natural rights, though it may determine the application and use of certain parts of those rights. For instance, the fruits of every man's industry and labour are his own, and society would be unjust to deprive any person of them without forfeiture; but yet the nature of society and government requires that part of private property should be appropriated to publick services, or for the support of society it self. Such application

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is no invasion of natural right, because every man who becomes a member of society is bound to contribute to the maintenance of it, and what is thus necessary is not his own but the property of the publick. But what is there in all this, to prove that the nature of government or society requires that men should be deprived of any natural rights, when it is not necessary to the support of society, yea when the full enjoyment of them is necessary to the honour and security of it? Every subject hath as such a natural right to serve the government under which he lives, and every government hath a claim to their service whenever they need it. And it is an injury to society, and a weakening of any government to deprive it self of the assistance and hands of any body of subjects, whose principles and practices have been long known to be loyal and faithful. This is as evident as that the strength of any government consists in the number and union of its subjects and friends, or as that the cutting off a sound limb will make the body lame and feeble. 'Tis true natural rights may be forfeited, and when you can prove that the Dissenters have been in any plots or rebellions, or executed for traitors, either their ministers or their people, or that they have discovered any spirit of disaffection to his late or his present Majesty, or their administration, I will undertake to promise for them, that they shall bear their exclusion patiently, without ever applying to parliament for a repeal of the incapacitating Acts. As to any thing that passed in former times, you will do well to let that pass in silence, for fear of involving the church of *England* in the same guilt with the Dissenters.

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But for a full conviction of this argument from the nature of society, we are bid to *look into the present constitution of Parliament and see how natural right stands there.* 'Tis done, Sir, and we are sensible that 40 s. *per ann.* is necessary for a voter in counties, and such a certain estate to qualify persons for representing their country in parliament. If these instances had been parallel they should have stood thus: That none but Churchmen of 40 s. *per ann.* should vote, and none but Churchmen with such an estate should sit in parliament; whereas the law is now upon a more equal foot, and a Dissenter as well as a Churchman with the qualification may vote for parliament men, or sit in parliament. Besides, there is this of equity in the law relating to freeholders, which you have not remarked, That the members for counties are properly representatives of the counties, *i. e.* of such as have real properties in the counties; and therefore such persons only who are proprietors are their only proper and natural electors; and of consequence others are not deprived of any natural right in being excluded from being electors, because, as they have nothing in the counties, they cannot have any right to be represented. And the equity of the law that determines the qualifications of a freeholder is very remarkable, in that it can scarce be supposed, but if a man hath any thing he must at least have 40 s. *per ann.* As to Corporations, you know the case is otherwise, in which all men have a liberty of voting according to the different nature of their charters, or their immemorial customs and practices.

As to the case of sitting in parliament as members, it is as foreign to the argument as the other; and when you ask whether every one hath not a natural right to a capacity of representing his

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country, I answer you, Yes. And must therefore observe that the expediency of this law was greatly doubted by many well wishers to the government at the time that it passed, and is even to this day. But however allowing the expediency of it, the question will be, whether every man that hath a natural right to a capacity of being chosen, be a fit and proper person to be actually chosen? If he be not, the limitation of that right to such only as are fit, is no injury to him, because no man can be injured by being debarred of a share in the legislature who is unfit for so high a trust. If such a certain property in land be indeed a necessary pledge of a sincere and steady concern for the interest of their country, the law to exclude those who are not able to give this pledge, is no more unjust, than it would be to exclude by law, cobblers from being judges, tinkers from being bishops, or bishops from being kings. If indeed such pledge be not necessary, I leave you to think what you please of the act of parliament that requires it. Sure I am that no law can be unjust which excludes those persons from important offices to which they are altogether unequal. But how doth all this make out the point you should prove; that men who are every way fit, who are possessed of estates to a certain value, as pledges of a sincere and steady concern for the interest of their country, should be excluded from parliament, merely because they think it unlawful, not to receive the Sacrament in your church, but in any church as a qualification? Or where is the consequence, that because some natural rights may be limited where the honour and interest of government require it, they may be abridged when the honour and interest of government require the contrary? Or what connection between a civil, prudent-

prudential qualification for places, and a religious Test for civil purposes? Or between the possession of such an estate, and taking witnesses of having received the Sacrament in your church? These are the queries you are to answer before your instances will be to the purpose; and till you have done this, the dwelling upon any other heads is only an artful way of drawing the attention of your readers from the main point; which is not, whether civil qualifications may not in some instances be insisted on, but whether religious Tests are lawful and expedient, where there is no defect of civil qualifications?

Your inference therefore, * *just so it is, and no otherwise* in the Corporation and Test acts, doth not follow; for just so it is not, but quite otherwise. For what, though the Legislature hath thought fit to establish a national church, doth it therefore follow that faithful subjects should be deprived of the capacity of serving the legislature; or that the government should weaken its own strength and security by rendering such persons incapable of serving it? The establishment of a national religion doth not necessarily infer an unjust usurpation upon natural rights; though I must confess that that national religion, which cannot be established without such unjust usurpations, is not fit to be established, because it is an unjust establishment, and contrary to the liberties and welfare of a nation. And that the legislature doth not think that the receiving the Sacrament according to your church is absolutely necessary to promote religion, and to preserve peace and order in the state, and for the admission of persons to offices of power and trust, is evident,

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because as hath been before observed, the members of both houses of parliament, who are in offices of the very highest power and trust, are not obliged thus to qualify at all. And if this qualification be not judged necessary in the highest, *a fortiori*, they cannot be necessary in the lowest.

I am really sorry you have no better arguments to vindicate your establishment, than by thus representing it as built upon the abridgment or invasion of natural right. But as you pass the same excellent compliment upon our very Acts of Parliament, and the whole Legislature, I do not wonder so much at your conduct. But I should think a little more complaisance to the civil power would better become you, as well as a little more charity to the Dissenters, whom you represent, with equal justice, christianity and truth, as excluded, because *they judge the communion of your church unlawful, as in it self sinful, and themselves obliged in conscience to destroy it as soon as they can.* Sir, they will go on to convict you of a notorious falshood, by never joyning with the enemies of the establishment to destroy it? No, nor using any unlawful or unchristian methods to amend and reform it.

After this harangue about natural right you come to *the truth of the case*, viz. *that many of those who are most zealous for abolishing these Acts as infringments of natural rights, are also in principle against any establishment at all.* Be it so, I would add that many who comply with these Acts are against the present established government, and some against christianity itself. Justice Hall was qualified as a justice of peace, and yet hanged for rebellion against the late King; and parson Paul, a minister of your church
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justly executed for the same crime. How then is the Test act any security to the present establishment in church and state? Are not unbelievers against church establishments? Are not the enemies to the present royal family worse enemies to the nation, than those who are against church establishments? And yet the Test and Corporation Acts do not in fact exclude either of these.

Forgive me, Sir, if I tell you freely, that you seem to value the church establishment above all considerations of religion and equity, and care not who you admit to offices of power and trust so you exclude the poor Dissenters. Deists, Jacobites, and Tories are all welcome, let them but keep to the letter of your favourite acts. With them you joyn hand in hand, and consent to share with them the advantages of the state; whilst the weight of your indignation is levelled against those, who are sincere believers of your own religion, and differ from you only in some lesser matters, in which that religion is but little concerned. But for God's sake, Sir, is this a proof of your christianity and loyalty? Why so sparing in your concern for the honour of Christ? Why so cool in your zeal for the interest of his Majesty? Before you reproach others for being enemies to all establishments, you should take a little better care of the principles and practices of some in your own. For I must take the liberty to tell you, that those who are in judgment against all ecclesiastical establishments, and yet have a thorough affection for the liberties of mankind, and the present happy civil establishment in his Majesty and his Royal Family, are much better friends to their country, and deserve better of the King and Nation, than the zealous champions for church power and establishments,

ments, who know no other foundations of loyalty but their own interest, and would sacrifice all the valuable concerns of the nation to their own ambition and pride.

But who are these many who are against all church establishments? Methinks, the history of past times should let you know, that the Presbyterians and Independants are not enemies to a national religion. They were once, what your church hath invariably been, against the establishment of any others but themselves. And the body of the Dissenters are to this day friends to an establishment, and even to your establishment, provided your foundations were a little larger, and some proper alterations made, which would not in the least lessen the honour or revenues of your church, or render the establishment of it in the least more precarious or feeble. So that your conclusions from the supposition, that there should be no church establishment, do not affect the Dissenters as a body; and as to any particular persons, they at least affect as many within the national establishment, as out of it.

But you think you are sure of the victory over us, if we allow there may be a church establishment. For if ** the civil power can establish a national church*, the question is, *whether it is not conducive to certain good ends that after the establishment, it be maintained and preserved*. What every law that hath been made for the preservation of that establishment? No. The penal acts in *Charles II.* times, and the Schism and Occasional bills in *Q. Anne's*, were made, I suppose, for the security of the established church. But you know, Sir, they

they are repealed. Why then not the Corporation and Test acts, if they are, as you allow, invasions of natural rights, and if by many years experience the continuance of them have been found greatly prejudicial to the true interest of these nations? Or do you mean, that every point of the establishment should be maintained and preserved? Is it then so absolutely perfect as to admit of no possible alterations? Were the authors of it inspired by the infallible conduct of the spirit of God, so that they could possibly commit no errors? Or if it was the establishment of human wisdom and prudence, are you sure there are no defects in it? Would you like to have *your Bishops excommunicated by their own courts* for merely civil affairs? You had better, Sir, honestly acknowledge that the constitution hath its blemishes, and that there are some things in it that you wish to see amended. If this were done, your constitution would not only be preserved, but become more glorious and sure. The body of the Dissenters wish not the destruction of your constitution, but the increasing honour and prosperity of it. And, I suppose, you cannot be ignorant that in King *James I.* time, at the conference at *Hampton Court*, and in *K. Charles II.* time, at the conference at the *Savoy*, and when the affair of the comprehension was debated in *K. William III.* time, they never proposed the abolishment of your national church, but the opening and widening the gates of it, that moderate christians of all parties might joyn in with it, and strengthen it. If therefore by this passage you would insinuate that the body of Dissenters are against all national churches, it is of equal charity and truth with the former, in which you represent them as bound in conscience to do
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all that is in their power to destroy the church of *England*. If you mean only a few of them by many, the charge is true of many of your own party, and your reasonings which have taken their rise from hence are really no better than declamation and amusement.

I shall only beg leave to add upon this head, that the notion of a church establishment doth not necessarily infer the exclusion of those from the rights of subjects, who cannot in conscience comply with it. This is indeed too often the case, though it be not the unavoidable effect of a national constitution. If this were the case, I must confess, that I my self should be in judgment against every thing of this kind. But as the religion of the magistrate may be encouraged without any civil incapacities and exclusions of others who differ from it; so I think that establishment is the most honourable and safe, which allows an entire toleration to all Dissenters from it, and never breaks in upon their privileges as subjects, for its own security and preservation. With respect indeed to the church of *England* and the Dissenters, the controversy is not properly about religion, but about the circumstantial and forms of it. They both believe in one God and Saviour, and hold the same scriptures as the rule of their faith; and of consequence * *the suggestions of natural rights, ability to serve, affection to the government in the state, and the like*, are reasonable and important suggestions; because if the Dissenters are not enemies to the religion of the established church, these suggestions are abundantly sufficient to demonstrate their right to all the common privileges of

of subjects. And I hope, Sir, you will consider what spirit you are of, and what care the civil power ought to take of those men, by whom the important suggestions of natural rights, ability to serve, and affection to the government in the state, are solemnly declared to be *no better than declamation and amusement*. Affection to the government in the state is nothing less than affection to his present Majesty, his family, and administration; and methinks you might have had more regard to your self and the established church, than thus to declare, that the Corporation and Test Acts are a much dearer concern to you than the preservation of his Majesty's person and government, which, under God, is the only security of all our civil and religious liberties.

You farther tell us,* that *it might be expected that the Dissenters should strengthen this argument of natural right by instances fetched from other Countries, where they could alledge that civil offices are bestowed without any regard to affection or disaffection to the national religion*. Excuse me, Sir, at present from doing this: I rather choose to present you with a worthy instance of a very worthy Nation in confirmation of the argument you are pleading for. It is that of the † *Japonesse*, amongst whom, *trampling over the images of our blessed Saviour and the Virgin Mary, must be annually performed in every family, as a convincing Test and proof of their abhorrence of the christian religion*. And on this account a court of inquiry is erected in all the villages and cities of the Empire, to make inquiry into all persons belief, some days or weeks after the taking the aforesaid Test. I

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* p. 15.

† Kempf. *History of Japan*, V. 1. p. 198.

might also put you in mind that the pagan Emperors of *Rome* had their religious Tests for the exclusion of all but those of the established religion; but I will not burthen you with too many instances of this kind.

If these should not happen to please you, I will answer your expectation, by producing instances fetch'd from other countries, where there are no religious Tests to qualify for civil employments. But I must first observe that you alter and shift the question when you talk of countries, where it can be alledged that civil offices are bestowed without any regard to affection or disaffection to the national religion. The question is not, whether we can produce instances where the civil power will not, in the distribution of civil offices, regard those most who they think best affected to their own religion. Supposing we can't, yet if we can produce instances from other Countries, where, though the established religion is most favoured, yet Dissenters are not excluded the rights of subjects, nor put under an incapacity for holding civil offices, 'tis full to your purpose, Sir. For this is all the Dissenters in *England* intend humbly to petition for, viz. the removal of their incapacity which the two Acts lay them under, without pretending to direct his Majesty when to employ them, should they be render'd capable; and this right of petitioning is as essential a privilege of a British Subject, as that of electing itself. But to the argument. *Scotland* and *Holland* are instances of this, where no protestant Dissenters are excluded from civil offices by any religious Test, but capable of being employed in them whenever the Govern-
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ment thinks proper to call in their assistance. In *Scotland* his Majesty hath a power of employing those of the episcopal Perswasion when he shall judge it fit; and in *Holland* the *Arminians* have not only the same capacity of being employed with the *Calvinists*, but are sometimes actually employed in the administration of publick affairs, and even Papists themselves in military offices. Not to add that Protestant Generals are often found at the head of the imperial Armies. 'Tis strange, Sir, you should think the Dissenters at a loss for such instances as these, and I wonder that in this argument you should challenge them to produce them: Yea, I may venture in my turn to challenge you to produce an instance of any protestant state in *Europe*, where religion is thus made subservient to secular purposes, and the Sacrament a stepping-block to wordly preferments. If then no such instances are to be found, ** methinks it should give a check to the declamations upon this head; and one would hope that common modesty should restrain people from writing in favour of a practice so unjust and abominable as this hath been represented in some late writings, and which doth not appear to have one protestant Country in the world to countenance and justify it.*

After this mighty observation about other Countries, which as to your argument ends in worse than nothing, you come to what I presume all that went before was wrote for, *viz.* to offer your advice to the Dissenters, if they would please to *think you worthy*. But, Sir, as you have thus misrepresented and abused them, you must excuse them from accepting it.

— *Timeo Danaos & dona ferentes.*

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* p. 15.

However they will not refuse it without considering it. Your advice is, that *they should not take their measures of fitness or unfitness for the attempt either from an old or a new parliament*, i. e. that they should think it unfit to be attempted in any parliament. Very kind and concise. What then must they do? Why wait. How long? Why, if the truth of the case be spoken, 'till Dooms-day; or which is just the same thing, Sir, till you and your friends are willing to consent to the appeal. But when will that be? Why when the Dissenters * *have wrought the body of the nation into a belief, that there ought to be no church establishment at all, or into a thorow dislike of the present establishment, or at least into a greater disposition to give it up, or to see it hurt, than hitherto appears amongst Clergy or People.* But you must give the Dissenters leave to judge for themselves, and to think they need not stay quite so long. 'Tis hard, Sir, convincing many of the Clergy. Do not put us upon that impracticable task. They would never have been convinced at the Reformation, had it not been for some powerful convictions offered them by the civil power; nor at the Revolution many of them, could they possibly have helped it; nor at the accession of King George I. in relation to the Schism and Occasional acts, had it not been by the strength and mighty evidence of an act of Parliament. The same argument under a steady government will always be attended with the same success. And if the legislature be convinced that the repeal of the Corporation and Test acts be reasonable in itself, and conducive to the honour and security of his Majesty's government,

ment, the Dissenters will not much trouble themselves about offering any other convictions. Convinced or not convinced, Sir, it is your duty, and will be found your interest to submit. Threaten the government with the contrary at your peril. I know not by what principle you make the belief of the Clergy and people necessary to an act of Parliament, or why the appeal should be made to them in opposition to the legislature. This favours rank of a Tory-Republican spirit, which must be the interest of the Government to suppress.

But this is not all. *To proceed regularly in the work* we must wait longer still. Hard, that there must never be an end of our expectation! We must wait *'till we have convinced the government, that an episcopal Church is not so well adapted to the support of monarchy as the Presbyterian or Independent model.* Surely, Sir, this is making us wait much too long. I should think that if we convince the Crown that the Presbyterian model is as well adapted to the support of monarchy as the Episcopal model, we need wait no longer. And of this I believe the Crown is already convinced. *Scotland*, Sir, is upon the Presbyterian model, and are not beneath the Episcopalians in the proofs of their loyalty. If there are any amongst them enemies to the present Monarch, they are those of the Episcopal model, who are there generally Jacobites, and want only an opportunity to pay their devoirs to the Pretender. And as for the Dissenters in *England*, they pretend to stand upon a level at least with those of the established Church as to loyalty, and affection to his Majesty's Person and Government; and as a body greatly to exceed them. You your self, I believe, know that the body of the Church is a divided body. Many of them are unquestionably
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in the interests of his Majesty. But are there not others of them whose submission is only the effect of necessity, and who would be glad of an opportunity to transfer their allegiance? What is it that hath made it necessary for the Government to keep up such a number of forces, to the great expence of the nation? Why to curb — I leave others to tell the men, and the religion they profess. I am sure it is not to secure itself against the protestant Dissenters, who, by every principle of interest, duty, conscience, gratitude and honour, are attached to the present Monarch, beyond the power of threatenings to terrify them, or bribes or prospects to corrupt them.

As to * *the services which the Bishops and Clergy and the friends of the established Church can perform to the Monarch on the Throne*, I have no intention to dispute them; but whether they have been, and are so very considerable in their services, as that for the sake of them his Majesty should be excluded from those which he may expect from the Dissenters and their well-wishers, this I not only doubt, but utterly deny. In the four last years of Queen Anne's reign the Bishops and Clergy and friends to the Church would have been no balance without the Dissenters and their well-wishers, against those friends to the Church, who would have set aside the present Royal Family, and brought us under the yoke of a bigotted and revengeful Pretender. If the Dissenters weigh any thing on the side of the Protestant religion, liberties and succession, they should be thrown into the balance; and if they are willing to give all the necessary pledges for the security of the constitution, the security of the constitution

constitution, I apprehend, requires that his Majesty should have a liberty of employing them, whensoever he thinks proper, in the administration of any offices whatsoever. Sir, the honour of religion, the liberties of mankind, the preservation of the establishment from the attempts of Church Tories and Jacobites, and the safety of his Majesty's Person and Royal Family, are the powerful arguments with which they plead for their being restored to the common rights of subjects.

It was some time after your Pamphlet was first published, before I was so happy as to get the sight of it. I suppose the impression was called in for the sake of adding that excellent passage at the beginning of p. 17, relating to the Union Act; in which it is declared, *That all and singular acts for the establishment, &c. of the Church of England, &c. shall remain and be in full force for ever; and that this act is declared to be an essential and fundamental part of the Union between the two kingdoms.* This you imagine to be a difficulty which lies in our way. But you shall see, Sir, how easily and dextrously I will remove it, I hope, even to your own conviction. If you had read that act through, you would have found also a clause to this purpose, *That the worship, discipline, and government of the Church of Scotland should continue WITHOUT ALTERATION TO ALL GENERATIONS:* And this act is also declared *to be held fundamental WITHOUT ANY ALTERATIONS FOR EVER.* Now if the Parliament of Great-Britain have made any alteration in this affair with respect to Scotland, what should hinder them from making an alteration in the same act as it relates to England? In the tenth of Q. Anne, an act passed for the toleration
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of those of the Episcopal Communion in *Scotland*; whereby, pray Sir observe, the act made *Anno* 1695, by which *Episcopal Ministers were prohibited to baptize or marry*, was **REPEALED**; and by which it was declared, that no pain or forfeiture should be incurred by any persons *by reason of excommunication by the Church Judicatories of Scotland*.

In the same Parliament also, the act made *An. 1690* concerning Patronages in *Scotland*, so far as it related to the presentation of Ministers by Heretors and Elders, was made void, as also another act to the same purpose, made in the first Parliament of *K. William III.* and the right of presentation to Churches, and dispensing vacant stipends to pious uses, was settled and confirmed in the Patrons, and the Presbytery obliged to receive such Ministers. Now, Sir, I would ask you, whether you dare affirm that the repeal of three acts of Parliament, in favour of Episcopacy, exempting persons from the Church Judicatories in *Scotland*, and making alteration in so tender a point as that of Patronages, was really a breach of the act of Union? If not, whether the repeal of the Corporation and Test acts by the same authority, could justly be inferred to be a breach of it? If not, to what purpose have you alledged this act of Union? And finally, whether it be not presumption and insolence in any single person, to intimate to a *British* Parliament, that they dare not repeal the Corporation and Test acts; unless they would be looked on as breakers of the act of Union, and subverters of the constitution of the *British* Empire? What, Sir, have you adjusted the dispute too about the powers of Parliament, as well as about the claims of the Dissenters? *Tantum rem? Tam negligenter?*

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The truth is, that no acts of Parliament which do not alter the constitution of either Churches, are a breach of the act of Union; and as there are no religious Tests to incapacitate those of the episcopal Periwasion in *Scotland*, from being employed by his Majesty in that part of his Kingdom, I apprehend the repeal of the Acts which incapacitate his Majesty from employing his protestant dissenting Subjects in *England*, would be so far from a breach of the act of Union, that it would be greatly strengthening it, and an high obligation upon those of the established Church of *Scotland*; who, 'tis well known, would have inserted a clause to this purpose in the act of Union itself; and were dissuaded from insisting on it only by the assurance then given, that the Repeal should be made at a more favourable opportunity.

*When you have thus prepared your way, by answering fairly the above queries, * you will attain your end, and prove the acts the Dissenters complain of to be unrepealable. But I am apt to think you will find it difficult to persuade the Legislature, either that their hands are thus tied up, or that the repeal of any acts, which they think unreasonable and mischievous, is any breach of the constitution. As to the settlement made after the Revolution, when that matter was maturely considered, it was the opinion of many as able heads as any age hath produced, and of his Majesty King William amongst others, that the bounds between the Church and the Dissenters might have been more wisely adjusted, and that the two Acts now complained of ought to have been repealed: And though there was a real disposition in some*

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then to do them justice, and the Bishops and Clergy themselves courted them as brethren, and made profession of their temper and good disposition towards them in the time when their *Zion* was in distress; yet when the storm was blown over, *Dissenters were Dissenters again*, their very Toleration was look'd on by many with an evil eye, and the clause for the repeal of these Acts thrown out, by whose influence and power no reader, who knows any thing of the transactions of those times, needs to be informed. *We have had long experience of the evil effects* of the continuance of them, both in the guilt that hath been contracted by the profanation of the Sacrament itself, and in the want of persons well affected to our happy settlement to fill up the offices of many Corporations; and I will venture to affirm, that if the Clergy would be thought to have that concern for the honour of Religion which becomes their character, and take the most effectual method to procure a lasting affection even to their own ecclesiastical constitution, it must not be by opposing all attempts for rescuing the sacred Institutions of Christianity from prostitution and contempt, and the restoring others to the enjoyment of their civil rights and liberties; but by favouring of such attempts, and contributing their assistance to render them successful: And though I know my self incapable of advising those reverend and moderate Prelates who now sit on the Bishop's bench; yet I cannot help saying, that in my poor judgment, their introducing a bill for the repeal of these two Acts; and using their interest for the passing of it, would highly become their sacred Character of *Overseers of the Church of God*, procure them the commendation of

of all the protestant Churches of *Europe*, render them truly venerable amongst all good men whilst they live, and secure to their memories immortal honour. History would record the great event, and perpetuate the names and praises of those Fathers of the Church, to whose pious endeavours the accomplishment of it was owing.

As to what time is most proper for it, I leave that to the providence of God, the equity of his Majesty, the wisdom of Parliament, and the present consultations on that important affair. I should, I confess, have been much more indifferent my self, whether at the end of an old Parliament, or at the beginning of a new one, had it not been for your decision, *That no time is proper*; and for a late scandalous libel, *The Free Briton*, which threatens the Dissenters with the loss even of the Toleration it self, if they ask for the farther rights they are excluded from. 'Till some authentick explication be given of these two papers, *God and all reasonable men will, I believe, justify the Dissenters* in a peaceable and dutiful address to the British Parliament, the source and guardians of our liberties, for the repeal of these two Acts, which they look on as occasions of the most horrid prostitutions of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, a reflection upon his Majesty's concern for the protestant Religion, the Test not being made to tie up the hands of a popish prince, a disgrace to the true protestant Church of *England*, a noble part of the catholick Church of Christ, and an invasion of their own rights as British Subjects: I say again, that 'till some authentick account be given of these two papers, I believe *God and man will justify the Dissenters in a peaceable and dutiful address to the British Parliament, for the repeal of these two Acts*

at that time, and at **THAT TIME ONLY**, which they themselves shall judge to be most convenient. I shall only add, that the coalition of Whigs and Tories, if they know their own principles, is both absurd and impracticable; and I may venture to affirm, without the spirit of prophecy, that when ever the *Whigs* unite with the *Tories* 'till they repent and be converted, and forsake and sacrifice their old, their constant friends, the protestant Dissenters, the peace of his Majesty's Government, and the liberties and happiness of this Nation are at an end. I am, Sir,

December

28, 1732.

Yours, &c.

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